

Uncertainty as Britain heads to polls

As Brexit, Trump and LaPen have shown, anything can happen at the ballot box.

AST year's politics was like watching a combination of the TV series *Game of Thrones* and *House of Cards*.

In *Game of Thrones*, records have been broken for the number of deaths per episode (an average of 172 in the first three series, according to some admittedly dubious websites) as power hungry crazies compete against each other. In *House of Cards*, the Machiavellian characters struggle to outdo each other in malice and manipulation.

As a proud British citizen, I am honoured that *Game of Thrones* is filmed in the UK, while *House of Cards* is inspired by a British serial of the same name.

Readers will forgive me, therefore, if I focus this column on British politics. After all, this will be the last column I write before I receive a much-needed miniature wattle tree at an Australian Citizenship ceremony next month.

Hitherto I have been taxed without representation, and now as a proud British-Australian-Jewish-Modern Orthodox-Traditional-Pluralistic-Jew I will participate in the democratic process.

Now back to Britain, where the "democratic" process resulted in Brexit, a paradox given that just 37 per cent of eligible voters voted to leave. And after repeatedly claiming there will not be an election prior to our exit from the world's most successful trading block and force for peace on an otherwise fractious continent, the unelected Prime Minister chose to call an election.

All the pundits are predicting a Conservative landslide. After all, the Labour party is in civil war with a far-left leader entirely out-of-step not only with his party, but also with his nation. On Israel and the Jews, their leader Jeremy Corbyn is possibly the most hostile 'mainstream' politician since the war. Meanwhile Theresa May is a (relatively) pro-Israel Prime Minister leading a (relatively) pro-Israel party. In the broader community, the Conservatives are trusted and respected, having brought the UK out of an economic mess. The Liberal Democrats have imploded from the coalition partner in the last government and the Deputy Prime Ministership to a party of just six MPs. The Greens have one MP and have a manifesto that is entirely uncosted while the Scottish National Party appears to be the only party of competent opposition.

So, a Conservative landslide?

Well I'm not so sure. After all, we were all confident that Donald Trump, a man who called Mexicans rapists, who boasted about grabbing women in their private parts and who seems to announce policy on Twitter during his 5am bowel movements could not possibly be elected president. Yet he tapped into a frustration in the US

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that no one else could, and gambled correctly that anger about lack of opportunity would outweigh disdain for his personality.

On Brexit, surely no country whose economy is almost entirely dependent on access to a free trade zone 26 miles from its border would vote to end that relationship. And surely the main reason for that would not be immigration, when the vast majority of immigration has come from the Commonwealth, thousands of miles from the UK and the European Union. But they did.

Corbyn's softness on terror against May's reputation for security now means nothing to many voters

So what on earth is going to happen in the UK?

While many pundits continue to predict a strong Conservative majority, I'm not so sure. If the music charts are anything to go by, which song has shot up the charts to overtake Miley Cyrus and Ed Sheeran in the Top 10? Yes, gold star to you, you guessed it: it's that old favourite *Theresa May is a Liar*. Featuring interviews and clips of our respected Prime Minister, it has a catchy chorus proclaiming "She's a liar, liar ... you can't trust her, no no no no."

The last three weeks of terrorist atrocities have complicated matters further. Jeremy Corbyn's softness on terror against May's reputation for security now means nothing to many voters. After all, he has embraced tyrants, Hezbollah, Hamas and the IRA and has even referred to Castro as a champion of social justice" (yes, the Castro who muzzles opposition and locks up opponents), while May was Home Secretary for six years and now presides over unprecedented violence on the streets and in the concert halls.

So if *Game of Thrones* meets *House of Cards*, literally anything could happen. And in less than two years' time, the UK leaves the European Union. What happens then? Well, if the negotiation ends in a bad deal

or no deal, we may see in this major G7 country – a Security Council member, a global financial centre and a country with one of the largest navies in the world – trade barriers, tariffs, borders, an end to the Good Friday Northern Ireland Peace Agreement, the secession of Scotland from the union and a recession like no other. Or we may not.

What we have learnt from recent

events is that we cannot predict what is going to happen. Take France. We thought it was all doom and gloom. The Russians seemed to be at it again, loaning money to the Front National and hacking Macron's campaign.

But it all turned out ok. Contrary to international stereotypes, the French have surprised us as the only sensible Western nation recently. Yes they had a blip in the first round of the presidential election when 21.5 per cent of them voted for a far-right extremist (just two per cent below Macron, who came first) – that's a big number – but they came to their senses in the second round, and let's hope that they keep that sense.

In December I will return to the UK for the first time as a dual citizen with a life elsewhere. I will visit a country that may seem so familiar in some respects but unfamiliar in others.

When I left in 2012, during the Olympics, the country was on a high. With a strong standing in the world, an awkward but mutually advantageous relationship with Europe, a recovering economy and a globalised outlook, Cool Britannia was back.

I fear, though, I will see a Little England, a country that has closed shop when it could have opened up. A country that voted to go back to the halcyon days of the past when it should be looking to the future.

A Brexit vote that was dominated by an older and less-educated demographic is forcing an inward-looking future on a more educated and optimistic younger population.

And a country with the potential to elect a hard-left anti-Israel Labour leader who has much in common with Brexit voters, even those on the right: a nostalgia for the halcyon days of the past, and a distorted memory that confuses what was, with what he would have liked it to be.

I hope I'm wrong. I probably am. Most of us have been recently when it comes to politics.

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